

**FY 2016-2017
to FY 2020-2021**

Nebraska Department of Education
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NEBRASKA'S INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM

PRE-APPLICATION GUIDE AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

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2016-2017 Pre-Application Closing Date: October 20,

Forward

Pre-Application Guide and Request for Proposals (RFP)

Prospective applicants interested in submitting a *Pre-Application* and subsequent full *Grant Application* to Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program* are encouraged to review the **Pre-Application Guide and Request for Proposals (RFP)** in its entirety. This document provides a general orientation to Nebraska's *Department of Education Innovation Grant Program* and competitive grant application process, including:

- Purpose of Grant Program;
- Eligible Applicants;
- Priority Considerations and Optional Competitive Preference Priority;
- Grant Program Design;
- Project Evaluation Requirements;
- Grant Program Timelines;
- Pre-Application Selection Criteria;
- Pre-Application Instructions;
- Pre-Application Definitions; and
- Authorizing Legislation.

Additional information and templates for the *Pre-Application* and required forms are available on the Nebraska Department of Education's *Innovation Grant Program* website:

https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/innovation_grant.html

Questions?

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) encourages interested applicants to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the *Innovation Grant Program* and competitive grant application process. However, the Department cannot provide guidance to an applicant on a specific project proposal. Questions regarding the *Innovation Grant Program* may be directed to the NDE Help Desk, using one of the following options:

- Email: nde.helpdesk@nebraska.gov
- Submit a *Helpdesk Request* from your NDE Portal Account (located in the upper right corner of the *Collection Announcement* page)
- Call the Voicemail Line: (888) 285-0556

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I. Request for Proposals (RFP): Pre-Applications

Nebraska's Innovation Grant Program

INNOVATION: A process, product, strategy or intervention, featuring new practices or methods that are advanced, original and creative, which will improve significantly upon the outcomes reached with status quo options and ultimately reach widespread effective usage.

Purpose

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is requesting *Pre-Applications* for grants through the *Innovation Grant Program*. The *Department of Education Innovation Grant Fund* and *Innovation Grant Program* were created with the passage of *Legislative Bill (LB) 519*, effective August 30, 2015. This competitive grant program provides funding to *Local Education Agencies (LEAs)* to support the development, expansion and investment in innovative best practices that improve:

- Education outcomes for early childhood, elementary, middle school or high school students;
- Transitions between any successive stages of education; or
- Transitions between education and the work force.

Funded projects must have the potential to be both scalable and replicable. Grant recipients are required to generate evidence of a project's effectiveness through a rigorous independent evaluation, culminating in identification, validation and potential "scale-up" of the innovative best practice(s).

Administration and Funding

As provided in *Nebraska Revised Statute (NRS) §79-1054*, the State Board of Education is responsible for establishing the *Innovation Grant Program*. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) administers the *Innovation Grant Fund* which consists of:

- Transfers pursuant to *NRS §9-812 (State Lottery Operation Trust Fund and Nebraska Education Improvement Fund)*;
- Repayments of grant funds; and
- Interest payments received in the course of administering the fund.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INNOVATIVE GRANT FUND	
FY 2016-2017 through FY 2020-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Beginning July 1, 2016, the <i>Nebraska Education Improvement Fund</i> receives 44.5% of the <i>State Lottery Operation Trust Fund</i>, after payment of prizes and operating expenses.▪ 17% of the <i>Nebraska Education Improvement Fund</i>, after actual and necessary administrative expenses, is allocated to the <i>Department of Education Innovative Grant Fund</i>.

There is currently approximately \$7.8 million available over the next three (3) years for competitive grants through this program. The State Board of Education will award the first round of funding in January of 2017, to grant projects deemed sufficiently innovative, with a high chance of success and statewide significance. The program is fiscally structured on a *Reimbursement Payment* basis, with grant recipients reimbursed after making approved project-related expenditures.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants eligible for funding through Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program* include:

- A School District;
- An Educational Service Unit (ESU); or
- A Combination of Entities that includes at least one (1) School District or ESU.

Authorized Representative

The *Authorized Representative* is the person who will legally act on behalf of the grant recipient (e.g., School District Superintendent or ESU Administrator). The *Authorized Representative* serves as the primary liaison between the grantee and the grantor (Nebraska Department of Education). The *Local Education Agency's (LEA)* governing body must annually delegate this authority to the *Authorized Representative*, with that action duly noted in its recorded meeting minutes.

Fiscal Agent

Under the *Innovation Grant Program*, only a school district or ESU can serve as a funded project's *Fiscal Agent*. For applicants that consist of a combination of entities, a participating school district or ESU must be designated to act as the *Fiscal Agent*. The *Fiscal Agent* is responsible for administering the project and all funds awarded through the *Innovation Grant Program*. The *Fiscal Agent* cannot be a separate legal entity created solely to administer the grant.

For more information about an *Authorized Representative* or *Fiscal Agent*, refer to [Nebraska Department of Education's State and Federal Grant Management Requirements and Guidance](https://www.education.ne.gov/federalprograms/index.html), available on the Nebraska Department of Education's Federal Programs webpage: <https://www.education.ne.gov/federalprograms/index.html>

Priority Considerations

Under Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program*, priority consideration will be given to proposed projects that address one (1) of the following:

Priority Consideration 1: Serves "High Needs" Students

Within the context of this grant program, *High-Needs Students* refers to students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support. This *Priority Consideration* is given to proposed projects that specifically serve students who:

- Are performing far below grade level;
- Are at risk of not graduating with a regular high school diploma on time;
- Have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma;
- Have a disability;
- Are English Learners (EL);
- Are migrant;
- Live in poverty;
- Are homeless;
- Are involved in the child welfare, juvenile/criminal justice or behavioral health system;
- Are in foster care or other out-of-home placement; or
- Have been incarcerated.

Priority Consideration 2: Focuses on AQUESTT Tenets

Nebraska's *Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT)* is a system of school improvement and support, adopted by the State Board of Education, designed to measure the performance of public schools and school districts. *AQuESTT* establishes school performance classifications through a framework that describes quality and accountability. This framework addresses two (2) broad categories of quality education: (1) *Student Success and Access*; and (2) *Teaching and Learning*. Within each of those broad categories, tenets are provided to describe the conditions which contribute to quality education systems. This *Priority Consideration* is given to proposed projects which focus on any of *AQuESTT*'s six (6) tenets:

Student Success and Access Tenets:

- Positive Partnerships, Relationships and Student Access;
- Transitions; and
- Educational Opportunities and Access.

Teaching and Learning Tenets:

- College and Career Ready;
- Assessment; and
- Educator Effectiveness.

Priority Consideration 3: Serves Students in “Needs Improvement” Schools

The *AQuESTT System* is used to classify all public schools and school districts into one (1) of four (4) categories: *Excellent*, *Great*, *Good* or *Needs Improvement*. This *Priority Consideration* is given to proposed projects that serve students attending a public school or district designated as a *Needs Improvement School*.

Additional information about Nebraska's *AQuESTT System* and *Needs Improvement Schools* is provided on the Nebraska Department of Education's *AQuESTT* website:
NDE.AQuESTT@nebraska.gov

Priority Consideration 4: Leverages Technology to Support Instructional Practice and Professional Development

Within the context of this grant program, *Leveraging Technology* refers to the innovative use of technology in the classroom to support student learning and inform teachers' professional development. This *Priority Consideration* is given for an innovative process, product, strategy or intervention that uses data platforms or technological tools to enable the development, integration, visualization and rapid analysis of data to inform instructional practice and improve education outcomes. Efforts for consideration also include those that support privacy, security, access to instructional assets, open source options, timely communication and information sharing among systems of support for students, parents and educators.

Optional Competitive Preference Priority: Matching Funds

In addition to the four (4) *Priority Considerations* listed above, applicants may choose to seek an *Optional Competitive Preference Priority: Matching Funds*. Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with community partners, the private sector and philanthropic organizations to “match” *Innovation Grant Program* funds using local dollars. Under of this grant program, *Matching Funds* may include:

- **Cash Outlay** - The grantee's cash spending, which may come from non-Federal and non-State revenues, individuals, agencies, institutions, private organizations or foundations.
- **In-Kind Contributions** – The value of non-cash contributions made by the grantee, other individuals, agencies, institutions, private organizations and foundations. *In-Kind Contributions* may include

charges for real property and equipment as well as the value of goods and services directly benefitting and specifically identifiable to the grant project.

To be eligible for the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority*, an applicant must secure *Matching Funds*, in the form of *Cash Outlay* or *In-Kind Donations*, equal to at least 25% of the total *Project Budget* amount. For example, an applicant with a total *Project Budget* of \$100,000 would secure at least the minimum 25% in *Matching Funds* (\$25,000) and request the remaining 75% (\$75,000) in *Innovation Grant Program* funds. **Applicants requesting the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority* do not have to secure *Matching Funds* prior to *Pre-Application*, but must list those funds on the *Line Item Budget Form(s)* submitted with the *Pre-Application*.**

Applicants requesting the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority* must demonstrate that at least 50% in *Matching Funds* have been pledged by the time of full *Grant Application*. If awarded a grant, the applicant will need to provide evidence that the remaining 50% of *Matching Funds* has been pledged within sixty (60) days of award. Using the above example, an applicant must include *Pledge Letters*, totaling \$12,500 in *Matching Funds*, from project partners in the full *Grant Application*; followed by additional *Pledge Letters* for the remaining \$12,500 in *Matching Funds* by March 3, 2017.

Reduction in Matching Funds

If an applicant needs to request a reduction in *Matching Funds* after submitting a *Pre-Application* to the *Innovation Grant Program*, the full *Grant Application* will be revised to reflect both the reduced amount of *Matching Funds* and the reduced total *Project Budget* amount.

Once a grant award is made under the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority*, the recipient must meet the pledged amount of *Matching Funds* (both *Cash Outlay* and *In-Kind Donations*). If a grantee cannot meet the pledged match amount, the Nebraska Department of Education may disallow reimbursement for grant expenditures and require repayment of any grant funds used that are not matched.

Grant Program Design

One of the central design elements of Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program* is its multi-phased structure, linking future funding opportunities to the quality of evidence supporting a grant project's effectiveness and potential to be both replicable and scalable. Funded projects must demonstrate the likelihood of future success through progress made toward stated goals, specific measureable objectives and targeted outcomes. Over time, the three (3) tiers of grants described below may be awarded to eligible applicants.

Phase I - Development Grants

Initially, applicants proposing an innovative promising practice or method supported by limited evidence may apply for a *Phase I - Development Grant*. This tier of State grants seeks to identify, develop, demonstrate or expand upon a process, product, strategy or intervention that is novel and potentially significant statewide. Proposed projects should not simply implement existing practices at additional locations or support primarily local needs. **This RFP invites *Pre-Applications for Phase I - Development Grants* only.**

Phase II - Validation Grants

Based on the *Phase I Grant* project's *Summative Evaluation of Progress Report* submitted in July 2019, the State Board of Education would recommend projects and represents:

- A best practice;
- A model for a State-supported program; or
- A local issue or promising practice for further study.

Projects recommended as a best practice or model for a State-supported program will be invited to apply for a *Phase II: Validation Grant*. In this tier of grants, funded projects must further substantiate that designation through a rigorous independent evaluation, focusing on the specific student population(s), school settings and contexts in which the practice or model is most effective. *Phase II Grants* are designed to build the project's capacity to deliver a best practice or model that can successfully reach statewide scale. Any barriers to replication, cost-effectiveness or expansion should be addressed in this tier.

Phase III - Scale-Up Grants

During the third tier of grants, *Phase II Grant* projects may apply for funds to support replication and statewide scale-up of an innovative best practice(s) or model for a State-supported program. In addition to improving education outcomes and transitions for an increasing number of students, projects awarded *Phase III Scale-Up Grants* must generate further information about the specific student populations, school settings and contexts in which the best practice or model is most effective as well as replication strategies for quick efficient expansion while maintaining effectiveness.

The State Board of Education may establish criteria allowing grant projects recommended as best practices to be included in the *Best Practices Allowance to School Districts*, beginning with aid calculated for *School Fiscal Year 2021-2022*. The criteria will specify the qualifications for a school district to participate in the *Best Practices Allowance* for each best practice included. The *Best Practices Dollar Amount* will be based on 85% of the estimated costs related to each best practice included in the allowance that:

- Would not otherwise be incurred without the best practice;
- Does not replace other such costs; and
- Is not included in another allowance.

On or before November 1, 2020, and every subsequent November 1st thereafter, the Nebraska Department of Education will annually certify:

- To each qualifying school district, the amount of the *Best Practices Cost* for that school district; and
- The *Total Best Practices Cost* for all qualifying school districts to be included in the calculation of State Aid for the next *School Fiscal Year*.

Project Evaluation

Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program* requires grant recipients generate evidence of the funded project's effectiveness, culminating in the identification, development, validation, potential replication and scale-up of innovative best practices that improve education outcomes and transitions for students. To accomplish this, grantees must use a portion of their *Project Budget* to conduct a rigorous independent evaluation of the project. This includes annually evaluating the project's progress toward stated goals, specific measurable objectives and targeted outcomes as well as its potential for success and statewide significance as a best practice or model for a State-supported program.

Project Evaluation Plan – Full Grant Applications Only

Applicants must submit a *Project Evaluation Plan* as part of their full *Grant Application*. If awarded a grant, the recipient and independent evaluator may be required to revise or expand upon the proposed plan. Technical assistance in finalizing the *Project Evaluation Plan* is available through the Nebraska Department of Education, if needed. Finalized *Project Evaluation Plans* must be submitted to the Department by March 3, 2017.

The *Project Evaluation Plan* is updated at least annually to reflect any changes. Updates must be consistent with the funded project's scope, goals and objectives specified in the original *Grant Application*.

Annual Project Progress Report

The *Innovation Grant Program* requires all funded projects annually evaluate and report progress toward achieving stated goals, specific measurable objectives and targeted outcomes. On or before November 1, 2017, and every subsequent November 1st thereafter during funded project years, grant recipients will submit an *Annual Project Progress Report* to the Nebraska Department of Education. These reports serve as the basis for the State Board of Education's *Innovation Grant Program Annual Report* to the Legislature.

State Board of Education's Innovation Grant Program Annual Report

On or before December 1, 2017, and every subsequent December 1st thereafter, the State Board of Education electronically submits the *Innovation Grant Program Annual Report* to the Clerk of the Legislature. This report includes each funded project's progress, evaluation results and *Best Practices Allowance*, if implemented.

Summative Evaluation of Progress Report

On or before July 1, 2019, each grant project must submit a *Summative Evaluation of Progress Report* to the State Board of Education and the Legislature's Education Committee. This report includes the results of all evaluations conducted on the project, to date. The *Summative Evaluation Report* serves as the basis for the State Board's recommendation on which projects represent an innovative best practice, model for a State-supported program, or local issue for further study.

II. Competitive Grant Application Process

Competitive Grant Application Process and Program Timeline

The Nebraska Department of Education has established a two-step competitive grant application process for the *Innovation Grant Program*. To apply for a grant, an eligible applicant may initially submit a *Pre-Application* to the Department. Specifications on the content of the *Pre-Application* and required forms are provided in the *Pre-Application Instructions* section of this [Guide](#). Applicants with highly rated *Pre-Applications* will be invited to submit a full *Grant Application*. However, other applicants may also choose to submit only a full *Grant Application*. This two-step application process is intended to save prospective applicants time, effort and money, while promoting quality *Grant Applications* and diligent project planning.

Nebraska Department of Education's *Innovation Grant Program* Webpage:
https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/innovation_grant.html

- ***Pre-Applications Due: Thursday, October 20th, 2016***
Applicants must electronically submit a *Pre-Application* to the Nebraska Department of Education, using the *Innovation Grant Program* webpage, no later than 5:00 p.m., Central Standard Time (CST).
- ***Highly Rated Pre-Application Notification: Friday, November 4th, 2016***
Following review of all *Pre-Applications* received, the Nebraska Department of Education will notify applicants with highly rated *Pre-Applications*. Applicants with *Pre-Applications* not highly rated will also be notified. The Department will post the *Nebraska's Innovation Grant Program - Grant Application Guide* and templates for the *Grant Application* and required forms on the *Innovation Grant Program* webpage.
- ***Grant Applications Due: Wednesday, December 14th, 2016***
Applicants must electronically submit the full *Grant Application*, accompanied by a *Project Evaluation Plan*, to the Nebraska Department of Education, using the *Innovation Grant Program* webpage, no later than 5:00 p.m. CST.
- ***Proposed Project Evaluation Plans Due: Wednesday, December 14th, 2016***
All applicants are required to electronically submit a proposed *Project Evaluation Plan* with their full *Grant Application*, to the Nebraska Department of Education, using the *Innovation Grant Program* webpage, no later than 5:00 p.m. CST.
- ***Grant Award / Denial Notification: Friday, January 6th, 2017***
Following the grant review process, the Nebraska Department of Education will notify all applicants of grant award or denial.
- ***Innovation Grant Program Workshop: January, 2017***
All grant recipients and the independent evaluators are required to attend an *Innovation Grant Program Workshop*, sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Education in January, 2017. Participants from each funded project should include: the *Authorized Representative*, evaluator and two (2) additional project staff or partners. This workshop will further orient grantees to the *Innovation Grant Program's* requirements for *Phase I – Development Grant* projects and evaluation.

- **Finalized *Project Evaluation Plans* Due: Friday, March 3rd, 2017**
Following review of the proposed *Project Evaluation Plan* submitted with the full *Grant Application*, the grantee and evaluator may be required to revise or expand upon the initial plan. Finalized *Project Evaluation Plans* must be submitted to the Nebraska Department of Education, using the *Innovation Grant Program* webpage, no later than 5:00 p.m. CST.
- **Implementation and Evaluation of Funded Projects: January, 2017 through June, 2019**
Grantees implement *Phase I – Development Grants* projects, working with the independent evaluator to generate evidence of an innovative best practice(s) and the project's capacity for future success and statewide significance.
- ***Annual Project Progress Reports* Due: Wednesday, November 1st, 2017, and every November 1st thereafter.**
Grant recipients electronically submit an *Annual Project Progress Report* to the Nebraska Department of Education, every year by November 1st, during funded project years.
- **State Board of Education's *Innovation Grant Program Annual Report* Due: Friday, December 1st, 2017, and every December 1st thereafter.**
The State Board of Education electronically submits an *Innovation Grant Program Annual Report* to the Clerk of the Legislature every year by December 1st.
- ***Summative Evaluation of Progress Reports* Due: Monday, July 1, 2019**
Grantees electronically submit a *Summative Evaluation of Progress Report* to the State Board of Education and the Legislature's Education Committee.

Selection Criteria

Department of Education Innovation Grant Program funds will be awarded to proposed projects deemed sufficiently innovative, with a high chance of success and statewide significance. The two-step competitive grant application process uses an abbreviated set of *Selection Criteria* for the initial *Pre-Application*, followed by more extensive *Selection Criteria* for the subsequent full *Grant Application*. The applicant's response to each of the *Selection Criterion* provided below serves as the basis for how the *Pre-Application* is assessed and scored. A *Pre-Application* may earn up to twenty (20) total points, with the points assigned to each criterion indicated in parentheses.

Significance (up to 10 points)

In determining the significance of the proposed project, the following is considered:

- The extent to which the project involves the identification, development or demonstration of an innovative promising practice or method that builds upon, or is an alternative to, an existing process, product, strategy or intervention(s) addressing similar needs;
- The extent to which the project will, or is expected to, improve education outcomes for the student population(s) served, or improve transitions between successive stages of education or between education and the work force; and
- The project's potential for statewide significance.

Quality of Project Design (up to 10 points)

In determining the quality of the proposed project's design, the following will be considered:

- The extent to which the project's stated goals, objectives and targeted outcomes are clearly specified and measurable;
- The applicant's capacity to successfully implement the project and achieve its stated goals, specific objectives and targeted outcomes, on time and within budget; and

- A *Logic Model* is included and provides a basic conceptual framework illustrating the relationships between the project's key components, activities, outputs and targeted outcomes for the student population(s) served.

Optional Competitive Preference Priority (up to 3 points)

Applicants choosing to pursue the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority of Matching Funds* must include a formal request in the *Pre-Application's Budget Narrative*. In assessing the adequacy of this request, the applicant's brief description of the following will be considered:

- The type of *Matching Funds* (*Cash Outlay* and/or *In-Kind Donations*);
- The dollar amount of *Matching Funds* and percent of the total *Project Budget* that they represent; and
- The source(s) of *Matching Funds*.

Evidence that *Matching Funds* have been pledged or secured is not required at the time of *Pre-Application*.

Pre-Application Review and Scoring

Pre-Application Review

Pre-Applications successfully submitted to the Nebraska Department of Education by the established deadline will be reviewed and scored. Only information included in the *Pre-Application* may be considered. Reviewers' comments and numerical scores reflect an overall assessment of the quality of the *Pre-Application* based on the abbreviated set of *Selection Criteria*. Comments indicate why the applicant's response to each criterion is considered fully developed, well developed, adequately developed, poorly developed, or not addressed. The numerical score indicates how well or poorly the applicant responded to the criterion. A written summary of reviewers' comments and scores will be provided to each applicant.

Suggested Point Scale for Scoring

Suggested point ranges for scoring the applicant's response to each *Selection Criterion* are provided below.

Maximum Point Value	Quality of Applicant's Response to Selection Criteria				
	Not Addressed	Poorly Developed	Adequately Developed	Well Developed	Fully Developed
10	0	1 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 9	10

III. Pre-Application Instructions

Completing and Submitting A Pre-Application

Before developing a *Pre-Application*, applicants should have a thorough understanding of the *Innovation Grant Program's* purpose, design and priorities as well as the competitive grant application process. Interested applicants are encouraged to review the *Pre-Application Guide and RFP* in its entirety prior to completing and submitting a *Pre-Application* to the Nebraska Department of Education. *Pre-Applications* not meeting the specified requirements and established deadlines will not be reviewed or scored.

Pre-Application Components

Under the *Innovation Grant Program*, a complete *Pre-Application* consists of:

- Cover Sheet
- Table of Contents
- Project Narrative
- Project Budget
- Required Forms (Information and Budget sheets)

Information for the *Pre-Application* and required forms are available on the Nebraska Department of Education's *Innovation Grant Program* webpage:

https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/innovation_grant.html

Formatting

A "page" is 8.5 x 11 inches, on one side only, with 1 inch margins at the top, bottom and both sides. A page number and applicant identifier is included within the 1 inch margin.

Double-space (no more than three (3) lines per vertical inch) all text in the *Project Narrative* and *Budget Narrative*, including titles, headings, quotations and references. Footnotes and captions may be single-spaced.

Use a 12-point font size throughout the primary text of the *Pre-Application*. Headings may be up to a 14-point font. Use one (1) of the following fonts consistently throughout the entire *Pre-Application*: Times New Roman, Garamond, Helvetica or Arial.

PDF File

The *Pre-Application* and required forms must be submitted as a single PDF (*Portable Document Format*) file, in read-only, non-modifiable format. Do not submit an interactive or fillable PDF file or password-protected file. Any modifiable PDF file will not be reviewed or considered.

Electronic Submission

All *Pre-Applications* must be electronically submitted to the Nebraska Department of Education, **on or before 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST), Thursday, October 20, 2016**, using the *Innovation Grant Program* webpage: https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/innovation_grant.html.

Each applicant successfully submitting a *Pre-Application* will be sent an e-notification acknowledging receipt. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. No changes or additions in a *Pre-Application* will be accepted after the established deadline to ensure fairness to all other applicants.

Pre-Application Instructions: Project Narrative

The *Pre-Application's Project Narrative* provides a description of how a proposed project will improve education outcomes or transitions for a particular student population(s) through an innovative promising practice or method. The *Project Narrative* should respond to the *Innovation Grant Program's Selection Criteria* and include:

- The *Priority Consideration* selected and a brief description of the challenge or problem to be addressed by the proposed project;
- A description of the project, including how the innovative promising practice or method will improve education outcomes or transitions for the student population(s) served;
- A descriptive summary of the student population(s) served, including estimated number;
- The project's goal statement(s), specific measurable objectives and targeted outcomes;
- The project's potential for statewide significance; and
- A brief *Logic Model*, as described below.

Logic Model

The *Project Narrative* must include a brief one (1) page *Logic Model*, depicting how the proposed project's stated goals, specific objectives and targeted outcomes will be achieved. It should clearly illustrate the relationships between the project's key components, activities, outputs and targeted outcomes, both theoretically and operationally. The *Logic Model* includes:

- The key components of the proposed project (inputs);
- Project activities;
- Project outputs (the product or service delivered) for the student population(s) served; and
- Targeted outcomes.

Page Limits

The *Pre-Application's Project Narrative* is limited to a maximum of eight (8) pages. This page limit does not include the *Cover Sheet*, *Table of Contents*, *Project Budget* or required forms. The *Logic Model* is limited to one (1) page and counts toward the *Project Narrative's* page limit.

Pre-Application Instructions: Project Budget

The *Project Budget* should be viewed as a crucial final check in clarifying the proposed project's practical application of the *Innovation Grant Program*. It is a statement of anticipated costs for which grant funds, as well as any optional *Matching Funds*, will be used to support and implement the proposed project. The *Project Budget* includes only costs that are allowable, reasonable and necessary to achieving the stated goal(s), specific objectives and targeted outcomes. Careful deliberation should go into the *Budget* to ensure the financial support requested will be adequate to carry out the project in an effective manner.

The *Project Budget* includes:

- A brief *Budget Narrative*, limited to two (2) pages;
- A *Line Item Budget Form* **for EACH year of project operation**; and
- A formal request for *Optional Competitive Priority Preference*, if applicable.

Rigorous Independent Evaluation

All projects funded through the *Innovation Grant Program* are required to generate evidence of effectiveness, culminating in the identification, development, validation and potential scale-up of an innovative best practice or method. Consequently, applicants must devote a portion of the *Project Budget* to conducting a rigorous independent *Project Evaluation*, including annual updates to reflect any

changes. **Although submission of the proposed *Project Evaluation Plan* is not required at the time of *Pre-Application*, it is essential that adequate funds for that purpose are included in the *Project Budget*.**

Innovation Grant Program Workshop

The *Project Budget* must also include estimated costs for four (4) project staff (e.g., the *Authorized Representative*, independent evaluator, and two (2) project staff or partners to attend the Nebraska Department of Education's *Innovation Grant Program Workshop* to be held in January, 2017.

Combination of Entities

Applicants representing a combination of entities, including at least one (1) school district or Educational Service Unit (ESU), cannot submit multiple budgets for each project partner. Only one (1) combined *Project Budget* should be submitted, representing the costs of all entities involved in the proposed project.

Budget Narrative

The *Budget Narrative* describes the proposed project's multi-year activities and specific costs associated with those tasks during each funded year, as well as the total cost to carry out the overall project. The *Budget Narrative* describes how expenditures in the *Line Item Budget* support the project's stated goal(s), specific objectives and targeted outcomes. Budget justifications are provided for expenditures supported by *Innovation Grant Program* funds, as well as any optional *Matching Funds*. Applicants should re-check all costs specified in the *Budget Narrative*, comparing those amounts to each line item cost and the combined totals listed on the *Line Item Budget Form(s)*. **Both the *Budget Narrative* and *Line Item Budget Form(s)* should use whole dollar amounts only.**

Authorized Representative and Fiscal Agent

The proposed project's *Authorized Representative* and *Fiscal Agent* must be specified in both the *Budget Narrative* and *Pre-Application Information Sheet*.

Optional Competitive Preference Priority – Matching Funds

Applicants choosing to pursue the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority of Matching Funds* must formally request this in the *Budget Narrative*. The request should include:

- The type of *Matching Funds* (*Cash Outlay* and/or *In-Kind Donations*);
- The dollar amount of *Matching Funds* and percent of the total *Project Budget* that they represent; and
- The source(s) of *Matching Funds*.

Evidence that *Matching Funds* have been pledged or secured is not required at the time of *Pre-Application*. Applicants will be required to submit a signed and dated *Pledge Letter(s)* from the source of those *Matching Funds* with the full *Grant Application*.

Page Limit

The *Budget Narrative* is limited to two (2) pages. This page limit does not include the *Line Item Budget Form(s)*.

Line Item Budget

All project expenditures to be reimbursed with *Innovation Grant Program* funds, as well as those provided through optional *Matching Funds* (both *Cash Outlay* and *In-Kind Donations*), must be listed in the *Line Item Budget*. The dollar amount of each expenditure is enumerated on the *Line Item Budget Form(s)*, accompanied by a corresponding justification to support this request in the *Budget Narrative*. Applicants should carefully re-check all dollar amounts and combined totals on the *Line Item Budget Form(s)*, comparing those to the amounts specified in the *Budget Narrative*. **Both the *Line Item Budget***

Form(s) and Budget Narrative should use whole dollar amounts only. An example of the *Line Item Budget Form* is provided in the *Pre-Application Instructions: Required Forms* section of this [Guide and RFP](#).

Optional Competitive Preference Priority – Matching Funds

Applicants requesting the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority* must include the *Matching Funds* on the *Line Item Budget Form(s)*. Both the *Line Item Budget* and *Budget Narrative* should reflect the total *Project Budget*, based on the combined total of *Innovation Grant Program* funds and local *Matching Funds*.

To be eligible for the *Optional Competitive Preference Priority*, an applicant must secure *Matching Funds*, in the form of *Cash Outlay* and/or *In-Kind Donations*, equal to at least 25% of the total *Project Budget* amount. For example, an applicant with a total *Project Budget* of \$100,000 must secure at least the minimum 25% in *Matching Funds* (\$25,000) and request the remaining 75% (\$75,000) in State grant funds. **Applicants seeking this Competitive Priority Consideration do not have to secure Matching Funds prior to Pre-Application, but must specify those funds on the Pre-Application's Line Item Budget Form(s).**

Multi-Year Projects

Applicants may apply for a *Phase I – Development Grant* with *Innovation Grant Program* funding for up to thirty (30) months. The duration of the *Phase I – Development Grant Project* must be determined at the time of *Pre-Application*, as a *Line Item Budget Form* is required for EACH project year in operation.

Line Item Budget Categories

For each project year in operation, an itemized cost breakdown of all expenditures must be provided on a *Line Item Budget Form*. Project-related expenditures are organized into the following categories:

- **Project Staff** – Specify each project staff's job position and the corresponding total dollar amount of that staff member's base salary, wages and FTE.
- **Fringe Benefits** - The grant recipient's normal fringe benefits contribution may be charged to the project. Specify each project staff receiving those benefits, by job position, and the corresponding total dollar amount of that staff member's fringe benefits. Include an explanation of how this rate was calculated in the *Budget Narrative*. **If fringe benefits related to direct salaries and wages are to be included as an Indirect Cost, leave the Fringe Benefits budget category blank.**
- **Travel** - **Include travel costs for project staff only.** Provide a breakdown of costs associated with each trip taken by project staff, with a corresponding justification in the *Budget Narrative*. Include the estimated cost of up to four (4) project staff (including the project evaluator) attending the Nebraska Department of Education's *Innovation Grant Program Workshop* in Lincoln during January, 2017 (e.g., lodging, meals and mileage).
- **Independent Project Evaluation** – Specify each independent *Project Evaluation* staff's job position and the corresponding total dollar amount for their base salary, wages and FTE. Indicate any additional expenditures related to evaluation, including annual updates to reflect any changes.
- **Contractual** – Include the costs for all project-related contractual services specifically incurred through actions the applicant takes in conjunction with an established procurement system. Consultant fees, expenses and travel costs should be listed if the consultant's services are obtained through a written binding agreement or contract. Identify who is being contracted with, purpose of the contract, description of the primary services provided and total amount of the contract in the *Budget Narrative*. **Do not include contractual services related to Project Evaluation under this budget category**, as those should be specified under the *Independent Project Evaluation* category described above.
- **Professional Development** - Indicate training-related expenses for project staff's professional development, including registration fees and resource materials. Also include any expenses incurred

through professional development events hosted by the grant recipient, such as participant stipends and training site rental fees.

- **Equipment** – Specify all tangible equipment and the cost per unit, including instruments, machines, apparatus or sets of articles that meet ANY of the following:
 - Under normal conditions of use can be expected to last longer than one (1) year;
 - Does not lose its identify through fabrication or incorporation into a different or more complex unit;
 - Is non-expendable;
 - Retains its appearance and character throughout use;
 - Is of significant value; and/or
 - May be small and attractive.

Equipment purchases of \$5,000 or more is capitalized (depreciated). A justification for all project-related equipment purchased must be provided in the *Budget Narrative*.

- **Supplies and Materials** – Include all tangible, expendable personal property. Supplies and materials differ from equipment in that they are consumable, expendable and of a relatively low unit cost. Supplies and materials purchased with grant funds must directly benefit the proposed project and be necessary to achieve its stated goals, specific objectives and targeted outcomes. A explanation of how the costs associated with supplies and materials are determined should be in provided in the *Budget Narrative*.
- **Other** - Indicate all other direct costs not covered under any of the above budget categories, such as printing and communication costs.
- **Direct Costs Sub-Total** - The sum of all line expenditures included under the above budget categories.
- **Indirect Costs Sub-Total** – Indicate any *Indirect Costs* to be charged to the grant, based on the applicant's approved *Indirect Cost Rate*.

The *Indirect Cost Rate* for each school district and Educational Service Unit (ESU) is available on the Nebraska Department of Education's Finance and Organizational Services webpage: <https://www.education.ne.gov/FOS/ASPX/IndirectCost/Default.aspx>

- **TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET** - The sum of the *Direct Costs Sub-Total* and *Indirect Costs Sub-Total*, reflecting all project-related costs items listed in each budget category.

Reimbursement of Expenditures

The *Innovation Grant Program* is fiscally structured on a *Reimbursement Payment* basis. Grantees will be reimbursed only after expending funds, as specified in the *Project Budget* and providing supporting documentation of those expenditures. Grant funds must be obligated by June 30, 2019, and expended by August 31, 2019.

Detailed information about allowable costs, general grants management principles and expenditure reimbursement is provided in the *Nebraska Department of Education's State and Federal Grant Management Requirements and Guidance*, available on the Nebraska Department of Education's Federal Program webpage:
<https://www.education.ne.gov.federalprograms/index.html>

Pre-Application Instructions: Required Forms

Pre-Application Information Sheet

Applicants must complete a *Pre-Application Information Sheet*, submitting it as part of their *Pre-Application*. This required form is designed to collect summary information about the applicant and proposed project which will assist the Nebraska Department of Education in assessing potential applicants' response to the *Innovation Grant Program* competition, the overall pool of applicants and the *Priority Considerations* being pursued.

Line Item Budget Form

A *Line Item Budget Form* is completed and submitted as part the *Pre-Application* for **EACH project year of operation**. All project-related expenditures to be reimbursed with *Innovation Grant Program* funds, as well as any supported through optional *Matching Funds* (both *Cash Outlay* and *In-Kind Donations*), are listed on the *Line Item Budget Form*. Include each expenditure under the appropriate *Budget Category*, using whole dollar amounts. Applicants should carefully re-check all dollar amounts and the combined totals on the *Line Item Budget Form*.

The templates for the *Pre-Applicant Information Sheet* and *Line Item Budget Form* are available on the Nebraska Department of Education – *Innovation Grant Program*'s website:
https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/innovation_grant.html



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM - PRE-APPLICATION INFORMATION SHEET

NDE Form: 02-081
Date Approved: 09-30-16
Date Due: 10-20-16

- FOR OFFICE USE ONLY -

TYPE OF APPLICANT (Indicate Type of Applicant with "X")		DATE RECEIVED (Month, Day and Year)	
Public School District			
Educational Service Unit		NDE COUNTY DISTRICT NUMBER	COUNTY (County's Name)
Other Local Education Agency (Specify)			

- APPLICANT INFORMATION -

APPLICANT'S NAME (Local Education Agency)			
Address (Street, City and Zip Code)			
AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME			
Address (Street, City and Zip Code)			
Phone Number		Email Address	
FISCAL AGENT'S NAME			
Address (Street, City and Zip Code)			
Phone Number		Email Address	

- PROJECT INFORMATION -

PROJECT TITLE			
PRIORITY CONSIDERATION (Select <u>ONLY ONE</u> , with "X")		TYPE OF INNOVATION GRANT (Phase I Development Grants <u>ONLY</u>)	
High Needs Students		Phase - I Development Grant	
Students in "Needs Improvement" School		Phase II - Validation Grant	
Focus on AQuESTT Tenet		Phase III - Scale-Up Grant	
Leveraging Technology		LENGTH OF GRANT (Number of Months - <u>30 Months Maximum</u>)	
OPTIONAL COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY: Matching Funds (% of Total Project Budget Amount - <u>25% Minimum</u>)			

- PROJECT DESCRIPTION -

<p><i>In 250 words or less, briefly describe the project, including goals, objectives and targeted outcomes for the student population(s) served.</i></p>



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM – LINE ITEM BUDGET FORM

NDE Form: 02-081
Date Approved: 09-28-16
Date Due: 10-20-16

- APPLICANT AND PROJECT INFORMATION -

APPLICANT'S NAME <i>(Local Education Agency)</i>	
Address <i>(Street, City and Zip Code)</i>	
PROJECT TITLE	

- BUDGET YEAR -

Complete a Line Item Budget Form for EACH PROJECT YEAR in Operation. Indicate the appropriate Project Year and corresponding Fiscal Year that this Form represents with "X".	Project Year 1	X	Fiscal Year 2016-2017	X
	Project Year 2		Fiscal Year 2018-2019	
LENGTH OF GRANT <i>(Number of Months)</i>		Project Year 3		Fiscal Year 2019-2020

- LINE ITEM BUDGET -

BUDGET CATEGORY	Innovation Grant Funds	Optional Match Funds	% of Total Budget	Budget Category Total
PROJECT STAFF <i>(Specify by Staff Position)</i> Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
Staff Position:	\$	\$		
Staff Position:	\$	\$		
Staff Position:	\$	\$		
FRINGE BENEFITS <i>(Specify by Staff Position)</i> Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
Staff Position:	\$	\$		
Staff Position:	\$	\$		
Staff Position:	\$	\$		
PROJECT STAFF TRAVEL Sub-Total:	\$	\$		\$
Transportation	\$	\$		
Lodging	\$	\$		
Meals	\$	\$		
INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
Evaluator Staff Position:	\$	\$		
Evaluator Staff Position:	\$	\$		
Expenses	\$	\$		
Travel	\$	\$		
CONTRACTUAL Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
Consultant Fees	\$	\$		
Expenses	\$	\$		
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
Event / Registration Fees:	\$	\$		
Site Rental / Expenses - <i>For Project-Sponsored Events Only</i>	\$	\$		
Participant Stipends - <i>Number attending Project-Sponsored Event</i>	\$	\$		
EQUIPMENT <i>(Specify)</i> Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
	\$	\$		
SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS <i>(Specify)</i> Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
	\$	\$		
OTHER <i>(Specify)</i> Sub-Total:	\$	\$	%	\$
	\$	\$		
DIRECT COSTS SUB-TOTAL:	\$	\$	%	\$
INDIRECT COSTS SUB-TOTAL:	\$	\$	%	\$
TOTAL:	\$	\$	%	\$

IV. Additional Information

AQuESTT TENETS

The Six Tenets of AQuESTT



The framework is designed around the following six tenets:



Pre-Application Definitions

Nebraska's Innovation Grant Program Terminology

The following definitions are specific to Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program*.

Combination of Entities - Two or more entities, including a participating school district or Educational Service Unit (ESU), acting collaboratively for the purpose of applying for and implementing a project funded through the *Innovation Grant Program*. (Source: *Nebraska Revised Statute (NRS) §79-1054*)

High-Needs Students – Students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who: (1) are far below grade level; (2) are at risk of not graduating with a regular high school diploma on time; (3) have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma; (4) have a disability; (5) are English Learners (EL); (6) are migrant; (7) live in poverty; (8) are homeless; (9) are involved in the child welfare, juvenile/criminal justice or behavioral health system; (10) are in foster care or other out-of-home placement; or (11) have been incarcerated.

Innovation - A process, product, strategy or intervention, featuring new practices or methods that are advanced, original and creative, which will improve significantly upon the outcomes reached with status quo options and ultimately reach widespread effective usage.

Innovation Grant Program – A State-funded grant program that provides *Local Education Agencies (LEAs)* with financial assistance to identify, develop, demonstrate, validate and expand (scale up) an innovative best practice or method to improve: (1) education outcomes for early childhood, elementary, middle school or high school students; (2) transitions between any successive stages of education; or (3) transitions between education and the work force. (Source: *NRS §79-1054*)

Logic Model – A well-specified conceptual framework that illustrates the relationships among the project's key components (inputs), activities, outputs and targeted outcomes for the student population(s) served, both theoretically and operationally.

Optional Competitive Priority Preference – An optional consideration given to applicants that “match” *Innovation Grant Program* funds using local dollars secured through community partners, the private sector and philanthropic organizations.

Phase I - Development Grant – A State-funded award of financial assistance given to a grant recipient to support the identification, development, demonstration and initial evaluation of an innovative promising practice(s) expected to improve education outcomes or transitions for students.

Phase II - Validation Grant – A State-funded award of financial assistance given to a grant recipient to further substantiate a project's designation as a best practice or model for a State-supported program through a rigorous independent evaluation, focusing on the specific student population(s), school settings and contexts in which the practice or model is most effective.

Phase III - Scale-Up Grant – A State-funded award of financial assistance given to a grant recipient to support further evaluation, replication and statewide scale-up of an innovative best practice or model for a State-supported program that improves education outcomes or transitions for students.

Priority Consideration – A competitive grant application factor taken into account when assessing which proposed projects best meet the intent and purpose of the *Innovation Grant Program* by: (1) serving “*High Needs*” students; (2) serving students attending “*Needs Improvement*” Schools; (3) focusing on an *AQuESTT* tenet; or (4) leveraging technology to support instructional practice and professional development.

Project Partner – An external entity, acting collaboratively with a *Local Education Agency* (school district or Educational Service Unit), for the purpose of applying for and implementing a project funded through the *Innovation Grant Program*.

Rigorous Independent Evaluation – An evaluation of a grant project that is designed and carried out independent of, but in coordination with, any employees of the entities who seek to identify, develop, demonstrate or expand upon an innovative best practice or method to improve education outcomes and transitions.

Selection Criteria – Specific considerations which serve as the basis for how a *Pre-Application* and full *Grant Application* are assessed and scored by grant reviewers.

Common Education Terminology

Many of the following terms are statutory defined or derived from rules and regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education or Nebraska Department of Education, as referenced in the citation after each definition.

AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow) – Nebraska’s system of school improvement and support, adopted by the State Board of Education to measure the performance of public schools and school districts and establish performance classifications through a framework that describes quality and accountability. This framework addresses two (2) broad categories of quality education systems: (1) *Student Success and Access*; and (2) *Teaching and Learning*. (Source: 92 NAC 10-002.01)

AQuESTT Tenet – A statement(s) used to describe conditions which contribute to quality education systems for public schools and school districts. In the category of *Student Success and Access*, tenets include: Positive Partnerships, Relationships and Student Success; Transitions; and Educational Opportunities and Access. Under the *Teaching and Learning* category, tenets include: College and Career Ready; Assessment; and Educator Effectiveness. (Source: 92 NAC 10-002.02)

Child with a Disability – A child who has been verified pursuant to 92 NAC 51 as a child with autism, a behavior disorder (emotional disorder), deaf-blindness, a developmental delay, a hearing impairment including deafness, an intellectual disability, multiple impairment, an orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, a specific learning disability, a speech-language impairment, a traumatic brain injury, or a visual impairment including blindness, who because of this impairment needs special education and related services. (Source: 92 NAC 51-003.08)

Department – The Nebraska Department of Education, which is comprised of the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education. (Source: 92 NAC 10-002.07)

Early Childhood Education Program – A pre-kindergarten part-day or full-day center-based education program or in-home family support (home-based) education program, established by a School Board or Educational Service Unit (ESU), designed to serve children who have not reached the age of five on or before July 31st of the current school year. (Source: 92 NAC 11-002.25)

Educational Service Unit (ESU) – An educational service provider in the state’s system of elementary and secondary education, as described in Nebraska’s *Educational Service Units Act*. (Sources: NRS §79-1202, NRS §79-1204, and 92 NAC 84-002.07)

Elementary School Grades – Those grades designated by a school district as *Elementary*, but not to include any above the 8th Grade. (Sources: NRS §79-101(4) and 92 NAC 10-002.08)

English Learner (EL) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) Student – A student who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school who: 1) was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; 2) is native American or Alaska native, or a native resident of the outlying areas and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of *English Language Proficiency*; or 3) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant. (Source: 92 NAC 15-002.02)

High School Grades – All Grades 9 through 12 in a school system organized with a four-year high school, and Grades 10 through 12 in a school system organized with a three-year high school. (Sources: NRS §79-101(6) and 92 NAC 10-002.10)

Homeless Student – An individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of 42 U.S.C., 11302(a)(1). This includes children and youth who: (1) are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camp grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals; (2) have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of 42 U.S.C. 11302(a)(2)(C); (3) are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and (4) migratory children who qualify as homeless. (Sources: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act – Title X, Part C of Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 92 NAC 19-002.09)

Local Education Agency (LEA) – A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control and direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary or secondary schools. In Nebraska, this includes a public school district or Educational Service Unit (ESU). (Source: Elementary and Secondary Education Act)

Middle School Grades – Grades designated by the school system as *Middle School*, and may include any Grades from 4 through 9. *Middle School* typically includes at least Grades 7 and 8. Common *Middle School* Grade configurations are Grades 6 through 8 or Grades 7 through 9. (Source: 92 NAC 10-002.14)

Migrant Student – A migratory child eligible for *Migrant Education Program* services if all the following conditions are met: 1) the child is not older than 21 years of age; 2) the child is entitled to a *Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)* through grade 12 under State law or is below the age of compulsory school attendance; 3) the child is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher, or the child has a parent, spouse or guardian who is a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher; 4) the child moved within the preceding thirty-six months in order to seek or obtain qualifying work, or to accompany or join the migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher described above, in order to seek or obtain qualifying work; and 5) with regard to the move described above, the child has moved from one school district to another. (Source: Title I, Part C of Elementary and Secondary Education Act, §1309)

Needs Improvement School – A public school or school district, classified through the AQuESTT System of school improvement and support as “*Needs Improvement*”, based on a combination of ratings in six (6) areas: Status, Improvement, Growth, Graduation, Non-Proficiency and Participation. (Source: Nebraska’s AQuESTT System)

Pre-Kindergarten Program – An *Early Childhood Programs* provided for children who have not reached the age of five (5) years by the date for Kindergarten entrance provided in Section 79-214 of Nebraska Revised Statutes (NRS). (Source: NRS §79-101(4))

School - An individual attendance center within a school system which provides elementary, middle, secondary and/or high school education. (Sources: NRS §79-101(2) and 92 NAC 10-002.19)

School District - The territory under the jurisdiction of a single school board as authorized in Chapter 79 of Nebraska Revised Statutes (NRS). (Sources: NRS §79-101(1) and 92 NAC 10-002.20)

Student – All persons (including children, emancipated minors, and adults) between the ages of five and twenty-one who have not completed high school. (Source: 92 NAC 19.002.18)

Common Grant Terminology

The following definitions are common terms used in a variety of grant programs, as provided in the Nebraska Department of Education's State and Federal Grants Management and Guidance Manual. The Grants Management and Guidance Manual is available on the Nebraska Department of Education's Federal Programs webpage: <https://www.education.ne.gov/federalprograms/index.html>.

Approval Date – The date that the application is approved.

Authorized Representative - A person who legally acts on behalf of the grant recipient, serving as the primary liaison between the grantee and the grantor. The governing body of a *Local Education Agency (LEA)* delegates their authority to this individual to act as the *Authorized Representative* of the school district or Educational Service Unit receiving grant funds.

Cash Outlay - The grant recipient's cash spending, which may come from non-Federal or non-State revenues, individuals, agencies, institutions, private organizations and foundations.

Competitive Discretionary Grant – A grant awarded based on its highest ranking in a competition among applicants. A grant application does not ensure the applicant of being awarded a grant.

Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program* is statutorily structured as a *Competitive Discretionary Grant*.

Equipment – Any instrument, machine, apparatus or set of articles that meets ANY of the following: (1) under normal conditions of use can be expected to last longer than a year; (2) does not lose its identify through fabrication or incorporation into a different or more complex unit; (3) is non-expendable; (4) retains its appearance and character through use; (5) is of significant value; and/or (6) may be small and attractive.

Fiscal Agent – An individual authorized by a grant recipient as responsible for administering the project and all funds awarded through the associated grant program. The *Fiscal Agent* cannot be a separate legal entity created solely to administer grant funds.

Under the *Innovation Grant Program*, only a school district or Educational Service Unit can serve as a funded project's *Fiscal Agent*.

Fiscal Year (FY) – A twelve month fiscal period, specified by statute or regulation. This may be based on: (1) **Calendar Year** – January 1st to December 31st; (2) **Federal Fiscal Year** – October 1st to September 30th; (3) **School Fiscal Year** – September 1st to August 31st; or (4) **State Fiscal Year** – July 1st to June 30th.

Grant - An award of financial assistance, in the form of money or property in lieu of money, to an eligible recipient for a defined purpose, as permitted by the associated grant program's requirements or regulations.

Grantee – The entity receiving grant funds from an associated grant program.

In-Kind Contributions – The value of non-cash contributions made by the grant recipient, other individuals, agencies, institutions, private organizations or foundations. *In-Kind Contributions* may include charges for real property and equipment as well as the value of goods and services directly benefitting and specifically identifiable to a grant project.

Matching Funds – Local dollars secured by a grantee that "match" State or Federal grant funds for an approved grant project. *Matching Funds* are generally required to represent a specified percentage of the total project cost. These funds may be in the form of *Cash Outlay* and/or *In-Kind Donations*.

Project Budget – A statement of anticipated costs for which grant funds, and *Matching Funds* in some cases, will be used in support of the project's activities and strategies proposed to meet the associated grant program's goals.

Authorizing Legislation

Nebraska Revised Statute (NRS) §79-1054. State Board of Education; establish innovation grant program; application; contents; department; duties; report; Department of Education Innovative Grant Fund; created; use; investment.

(1) The State Board of Education shall establish a competitive innovation grant program with funding from the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund pursuant to section 9-812. Grantees shall be a school district, an educational service unit, or a combination of entities that includes at least one school district or educational service unit. For grantees that consist of a combination of entities, a participating school district or educational service unit shall be designated to act as the fiscal agent and administer the program funded by the grant. The state board shall only award grants pursuant to applications that the state board deems to be sufficiently innovative and to have a high chance of success.

(2) An application for a grant pursuant to subsection (1) of this section shall describe:

- (a) Specific measurable objectives for improving education outcomes for early childhood students, elementary students, middle school students, or high school students or for improving the transitions between any successive stages of education or between education and the workforce;
- (b) The method for annually evaluating progress toward a measurable objective, with a summative evaluation of progress submitted to the state board and electronically to the Education Committee of the Legislature on or before July 1, 2019;
- (c) The potential for the project to be both scalable and replicable; and
- (d) Any cost savings that could be achieved by reductions in other programs if the funded program is successful.

(3) Based on evaluations received on or before July 1, 2019, for each grant, the State Board of Education shall recommend the grant project as:

- (a) Representing a best practice;
- (b) A model for a state-supported program; or
- (c) A local issue for further study.

(4) For grant projects that are recommended as best practices, the State Board of Education may establish criteria allowing such best practices to be included in the best practices allowance to school districts pursuant to section 79-1004 beginning with aid calculated for school fiscal year 2021-22. The criteria shall:

- (a) Specify qualifications for a school district to participate in the best practices allowance for each best practice to be included in the allowance;
- (b) Specify a best practices dollar amount based on eighty-five percent of the estimated costs related to each best practice included in the allowance that would not otherwise be incurred without the best practice, that do not replace other such costs, and that are not included in another allowance;
- (c) Specify an accountability process which will result in a future aid correction if a school district is found to be in violation of any of the qualifications; and
- (d) Specify any other criteria deemed relevant by the state board.

(5) On or before November 1, 2020, and on or before November 1 of each year thereafter, the department shall certify to each qualifying school district the amount of the best practices cost pursuant to this section for such school district and the total best practices cost for all qualifying school districts to be included in the calculation of state aid for the next school fiscal year.

(6) On or before December 1, 2017, and on or before December 1 of each year thereafter, the state board shall electronically submit a report to the Clerk of the Legislature on all such grants, including, but not limited to, the results of the evaluations for each grant and on the best practices allowance if the allowance has been implemented. The state board may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out this section, including, but not limited to, application procedures, selection procedures, and annual evaluation reporting procedures.

(7) The Department of Education Innovative Grant Fund is created. The fund shall be administered by the State Department of Education and shall consist of transfers pursuant to section 9-812, repayments of grant funds, and interest payments received in the course of administering this section. The fund shall be used to carry out this section. Any money in the fund available for investment shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act.

Source: Laws 2015, LB519, § 2.

Effective Date: August 30, 2015

Cross References:

Nebraska Capital Expansion Act, see section 72-1269.

Nebraska State Funds Investment Act, see section 72-1260.

Nebraska Revised Statute (NRS) §9-812. State Lottery Operation Trust Fund; State Lottery Operation Cash Fund; State Lottery Prize Trust Fund; created; transfers; Education Innovation Fund; created; use; Nebraska Education Improvement Fund; created; use; investment; unclaimed prize money; use.

(1) All money received from the operation of lottery games conducted pursuant to the State Lottery Act in Nebraska shall be credited to the State Lottery Operation Trust Fund, which fund is hereby created. All payments of the costs of establishing and maintaining the lottery games shall be made from the State Lottery Operation Cash Fund. In accordance with legislative appropriations, money for payments for expenses of the division shall be transferred from the State Lottery Operation Trust Fund to the State Lottery Operation Cash Fund, which fund is hereby created. All money necessary for the payment of lottery prizes shall be transferred from the State Lottery Operation Trust Fund to the State Lottery Prize Trust Fund, which fund is hereby created. The amount used for the payment of lottery prizes shall not be less than forty percent of the dollar amount of the lottery tickets which have been sold.

(2) A portion of the dollar amount of the lottery tickets which have been sold on an annualized basis shall be transferred from the State Lottery Operation Trust Fund to the Education Innovation Fund, the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund, the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund, the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, the Nebraska State Fair Board, and the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund as provided in subsection (3) of this section. The dollar amount transferred pursuant to this subsection shall equal the greater of (a) the dollar amount transferred to the funds in fiscal year 2002-03 or (b) any amount which constitutes at least twenty-two percent and no more than twenty-five percent of the dollar amount of the lottery tickets which have been sold on an annualized basis. To the extent that funds are available, the Tax Commissioner and director may authorize a transfer exceeding twenty-five percent of the dollar amount of the lottery tickets sold on an annualized basis.

(3) Of the money available to be transferred to the Education Innovation Fund, the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund, the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund, the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, the Nebraska State Fair Board, and the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund:

- (a) The first five hundred thousand dollars shall be transferred to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund to be used as provided in section 9-1006;
- (b) Beginning July 1, 2016, forty-four and one-half percent of the money remaining after the payment of prizes and operating expenses and the initial transfer to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund shall be transferred to the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund;
- (c) Through June 30, 2016, nineteen and three-fourths percent of the money remaining after the payment of prizes and operating expenses and the initial transfer to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund shall be transferred to the Education Innovation Fund;
- (d) Through June 30, 2016, twenty-four and three-fourths percent of the money remaining after the payment of prizes and operating expenses and the initial transfer to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund shall be transferred to the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund;
- (e) Forty-four and one-half percent of the money remaining after the payment of prizes and operating expenses and the initial transfer to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund shall be transferred to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund to be used as provided in the Nebraska Environmental Trust Act;
- (f) Ten percent of the money remaining after the payment of prizes and operating expenses and the initial transfer to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund shall be transferred to the Nebraska State Fair Board if the most populous city within the county in which the fair is located provides matching funds equivalent to ten percent of the funds available for transfer. Such matching funds may be obtained from the city and any other private or public entity, except that no portion of such matching funds shall be provided by the state. If the Nebraska State Fair ceases operations, ten percent of the money remaining after the payment of prizes and operating expenses and the initial transfer to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund shall be transferred to the General Fund; and

- (g) One percent of the money remaining after the payment of prizes and operating expenses and the initial transfer to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund shall be transferred to the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund to be used as provided in section 9-1006.

(4)(a) The Education Innovation Fund is created. At least seventy-five percent of the lottery proceeds allocated to the Education Innovation Fund shall be available for disbursement.

(b) For fiscal year 2014-15, the Education Innovation Fund shall be allocated, after administrative expenses, as follows: (i) The first one million two hundred thousand dollars shall be transferred to the Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund to fund the Excellence in Teaching Act; (ii) the next allocation shall be distributed to local systems as grants for approved accelerated or differentiated curriculum programs for students identified as learners with high ability pursuant to section 79-1108.02 in an aggregated amount up to the amount distributed in the prior fiscal year for such purposes increased by the basic allowable growth rate pursuant to section 79-1025; (iii) the next one million eight hundred fifty thousand dollars shall be allocated to early childhood education grants awarded by the State Department of Education pursuant to section 79-1103; (iv) the next one million dollars shall be transferred to the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund for use pursuant to section 79-1104.02; (v) the next two hundred thousand dollars shall be used to provide grants to establish bridge programs pursuant to sections 79-1189 to 79-1195; (vi) the next ten thousand dollars shall be used to fund the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; (vii) the next two million dollars shall be allocated for distance education equipment and incentives pursuant to sections 79-1336 and 79-1337; (viii) the next one million dollars shall be transferred to the School District Reorganization Fund; (ix) up to the next one hundred forty-five thousand dollars shall be used by the State Department of Education to implement section 79-759; and (x) the next three hundred thirty-five thousand dollars shall be allocated to local systems as grants awarded by the State Department of Education to assist schools in evaluating and improving career education programs to align such programs with the state's economic and workforce needs. Except for funds transferred to the School District Reorganization Fund, the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund, or the department for early childhood education grants pursuant to section 79-1103, no funds received as allocations from the Education Innovation Fund pursuant to this subdivision may be obligated for payment to be made after June 30, 2016, and such funds received as transfers or allocations from the Education Innovation Fund that have not been used for their designated purpose as of such date shall be transferred to the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund on or before August 1, 2016.

(c) For fiscal year 2015-16, the Education Innovation Fund shall be allocated, after administrative expenses, as follows: (i) The first one million two hundred thousand dollars shall be transferred to the Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund to fund the Excellence in Teaching Act; (ii) the next allocation shall be distributed to local systems as grants for approved accelerated or differentiated curriculum programs for students identified as learners with high ability pursuant to section 79-1108.02 in an aggregated amount up to the amount distributed in the prior fiscal year for such purposes increased by the basic allowable growth rate pursuant to section 79-1025; (iii) the next one million nine hundred fifty thousand dollars shall be allocated to early childhood education grants awarded by the State Department of Education pursuant to section 79-1103; (iv) the next one million dollars shall be transferred to the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund for use pursuant to section 79-1104.02; (v) the next ten thousand dollars shall be used to fund the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; (vi) the next two million five hundred thousand dollars shall be allocated for distance education equipment and incentives pursuant to sections 79-1336 and 79-1337; (vii) the next one million dollars shall be transferred to the School District Reorganization Fund; (viii) up to the next one hundred forty-five thousand dollars shall be used by the State Department of Education to implement section 79-759; and (ix) of the amount remaining, (A) three million dollars shall be retained in the Education Innovation Fund to transfer to the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund on June 30, 2016, and (B) the remaining amount shall be allocated to local systems as grants awarded by the State Department of Education to assist schools in evaluating and improving career education programs to align such programs with the state's economic and workforce needs. Except for funds

transferred to the School District Reorganization Fund, the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund, or the department for early childhood education grants pursuant to section 79-1103, no funds received as allocations from the Education Innovation Fund pursuant to this subdivision may be obligated for payment to be made after June 30, 2016, and such funds received as transfers or allocations from the Education Innovation Fund that have not been used for their designated purpose as of such date shall be transferred to the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund on or before August 1, 2016.

(d) The Education Innovation Fund terminates on June 30, 2016. Any money in the fund on such date shall be transferred to the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund on such date.

(5) The Nebraska Education Improvement Fund is created. The fund shall consist of money transferred pursuant to subsections (3) and (4) of this section, money transferred pursuant to section 85-1920, and any other funds appropriated by the Legislature. The fund shall be allocated, after actual and necessary administrative expenses, as provided in this section for fiscal years 2016-17 through 2020-21. A portion of each allocation may be retained by the agency to which the allocation is made or the agency administering the fund to which the allocation is made for actual and necessary expenses incurred by such agency for administration, evaluation, and technical assistance related to the purposes of the allocation, except that no amount of the allocation to the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund may be used for such purposes. On or before December 31, 2019, the Education Committee of the Legislature shall electronically submit recommendations to the Clerk of the Legislature regarding how the fund should be allocated to best advance the educational priorities of the state for the five-year period beginning with fiscal year 2021-22. For fiscal year 2016-17, an amount equal to ten percent of the revenue allocated to the Education Innovation Fund and to the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund for fiscal year 2015-16 shall be retained in the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund. For fiscal years 2017-18 through 2020-21, an amount equal to ten percent of the revenue received by the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund in the prior fiscal year shall be retained in the fund. For fiscal years 2016-17 through 2020-21, the remainder of the fund shall be allocated as follows:

(a) One percent of the allocated funds to the Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Fund to carry out the Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program Act;

(b) Seventeen percent of the allocated funds to the Department of Education Innovative Grant Fund for competitive innovation grants pursuant to section 79-1054;

(c) Nine percent of the allocated funds to the Community College Gap Assistance Program Fund to carry out the community college gap assistance program;

(d) Eight percent of the allocated funds to the Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund to carry out the Excellence in Teaching Act;

(e) Sixty-two percent of the allocated funds to the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund to carry out the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Act in conjunction with appropriations from the General Fund; and

(f) Three percent of the allocated funds to fund distance education incentives pursuant to section 79-1337.

(6) Any money in the State Lottery Operation Trust Fund, the State Lottery Operation Cash Fund, the State Lottery Prize Trust Fund, the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund, or the Education Innovation Fund available for investment shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act.

(7) Unclaimed prize money on a winning lottery ticket shall be retained for a period of time prescribed by rules and regulations. If no claim is made within such period, the prize money shall be used at the discretion of the Tax Commissioner for any of the purposes prescribed in this section.

Source: Laws 1991, LB 849, § 12; Laws 1992, LB 1257, § 57; Laws 1993, LB 138, § 28; Laws 1993, LB 563, § 24; Laws 1994, LB 647, § 5; Laws 1994, LB 694, § 119; Laws 1994, LB 1066, § 11; Laws 1995, LB 275, §

1;Laws 1995, LB 860, § 1;Laws 1996, LB 900, § 1015;Laws 1996, LB 1069, § 1;Laws 1997, LB 118, § 1;Laws 1997, LB 347, § 1;Laws 1997, LB 710, § 1;Laws 1997, LB 865, § 1;Laws 1998, LB 924, § 16;Laws 1998, LB 1228, § 7;Laws 1998, LB 1229, § 1;Laws 1999, LB 386, § 1;Laws 2000, LB 659, § 2;Laws 2000, LB 1243, § 1;Laws 2001, LB 797, § 1;Laws 2001, LB 833, § 1;Laws 2001, Spec. Sess., LB 3, § 1;Laws 2002, LB 1105, § 418;Laws 2002, LB 1310, § 3;Laws 2002, Second Spec. Sess., LB 1, § 1;Laws 2003, LB 367, § 1;Laws 2003, LB 574, § 21;Laws 2004, LB 1083, § 83;Laws 2004, LB 1091, § 1;Laws 2006, LB 1208, § 1;Laws 2007, LB638, § 16;Laws 2009, LB286, § 4;Laws 2009, LB545, § 1;Laws 2009, LB547, § 1;Laws 2009, First Spec. Sess., LB2, § 1; Laws 2010, LB956, § 1;Laws 2011, LB333, § 1;Laws 2011, LB575, § 7;Laws 2011, LB637, § 22;Laws 2012, LB1079, § 9;Laws 2013, LB6, § 9;Laws 2013, LB366, § 8;Laws 2013, LB495, § 1;Laws 2013, LB497, § 1;Laws 2014, LB967, § 2;Laws 2015, LB519, § 1.

Effective Date: August 30, 2015

Cross References

Excellence in Teaching Act, see section 79-8,132.

Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program Act, see section 79-2501.

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, see section 79-2201.

Nebraska Capital Expansion Act, see section 72-1269.

Nebraska Environmental Trust Act, see section 81-15,167.

Nebraska Opportunity Grant Act, see section 85-1901.

Nebraska State Funds Investment Act, see section 72-1260.